

Caucus, I rise today to recognize May as National Foster Care Month.

There are currently over 107,000 foster youth eligible and waiting for adoption and more than 400,000 youth in the foster care system. In an effort to raise awareness about the needs and the experience of these youth, I am honored to join my colleagues in a bipartisan manner to acknowledge the importance of this special month.

Through increased understanding and dedicated caregivers, we can and must continue to make important advances in providing more stable and caring environments for all foster youth. We must focus on learning from State and local child welfare providers, advocates, and foster children to better know how we can help. The needs of these youth are urgent and real. And while there are many alarming facts and figures that reflect the challenges these children face, the resiliency of foster youth remains strong; and we must all continue to do our part. Together, we can make National Foster Care Month a success.

#### FOSTER CARE MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BASS) for 5 minutes.

Ms. BASS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize May as National Foster Care Month. The goal of this month is to raise awareness about the experiences and needs of more than 400,000 youth in the foster care system.

Throughout the month, members of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth will share stories of foster youth in their districts. Today I would like to share a story from my constituent Kevin, a young man from Hollywood, California.

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His story is unique, yet his resiliency is characteristic of hundreds of thousands of foster youth across our Nation.

Kevin was born into a family addicted to crack cocaine. He was removed from his parents at the age of 2, after a near-death drowning experience. After years in a group home, he was placed with a legal guardian. But this placement was difficult. Kevin was placed back with his biological mother, until she was incarcerated for the third time, leaving Kevin with no place to go.

In the face of all these challenges, Kevin has persevered. He recently transferred from community college with a full-ride scholarship and a 3.8 GPA. He plans to become a professor in the social sciences.

About his time in and out of foster care, Kevin says:

I am extremely grateful for the opportunities I have had because they allow me to identify and connect with a broad range of people.

Today, in honor of Kevin's courage and tenacity, I join my fellow cochairs

of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth and with Representative TOM MARINO, as well as over 90 of our colleagues in the House and the Senate, in introducing a bipartisan, bicameral resolution in recognition of National Foster Care Month. I invite my colleagues to cosponsor the bipartisan resolution as well as join the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth.

#### THANKING OUR VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DOLD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DOLD. This Memorial Day we will take time to remember those who have given their lives to keep our Nation safe and free. So many brave men and women have given the ultimate sacrifice to ensure that we can enjoy the very freedoms and liberties that we all enjoy today. I want to thank all of those who are currently serving, those who have served, and their families for putting our Nation first. America is a stronger and better Nation because of your sacrifice and service.

Recently, veterans from Illinois came to Washington, D.C., and it was truly an honor and pleasure to meet the Illinois Honor Flight at the World War II Memorial, not only to hear their stories, but to have an opportunity to talk with these true heroes and learn more about their friends, those who made it back and those who didn't. The heroic efforts of the men and women of World War II—and I would argue from all of our conflicts—helped keep our Nation safe and away from harm's way. I cannot thank them enough for all they have done for our country.

Last month, I had the privilege of presenting two veterans from Illinois's 10th Congressional District with their medals that had not been presented. These men served their country with distinction and deserve the medals that they have earned.

George Ott, from Arlington Heights, served as an Air Force staff sergeant in the 6th Aircraft Repair Unit during World War II. He served from 1944 to 1946, serving in the Marshall Islands, the Philippines, and Japan. I was able to present him with the World War II Victory Medal, the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, and the Army Good Conduct Medal.

Thomas Vana, of Des Plaines, was another veteran I was able to serve and present medals. He served as a sergeant in the 2nd Infantry Division during the Korean War. He served as an Active Duty medic from 1970 to 1974. I was able to present him with the Army Good Conduct Medal and the Korea Defense Service Medal.

Beyond working directly with veterans, Mr. Speaker, to ensure they receive the recognition that they have earned, my office is also working with veterans to document their stories. The Veterans History Project is an ongoing effort by the Library of Congress to collect stories and photos to learn

more about those who have served in battle and conflict not only at home, but overseas. My office is open to anyone who would like to document their story and share their experiences with the American public. It's important that we preserve these records, Mr. Speaker, so that future generations know the sacrifices that our men and women in the military have made. I would encourage anyone from the 10th District in Illinois who has served to call the Northbrook office at (847) 272-0404 and share your story so that we can preserve it for years and years to come.

I want to thank all those who have served, those that are serving currently, and those that have given their lives to protect our country. This Memorial Day I believe that we must honor those who have fallen and never forget the sacrifices that they have made to make sure that our country remains safe and free.

#### THE MODERN TAX SYSTEM: FAIR TO THE AVERAGE AMERICAN?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. CRITZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRITZ. Mr. Speaker, in April, the Johnstown-Somerset Central Labor Council announced the winners of its annual scholarship essay contest. This year's first-place winner, Lisa Vatauvuk, wrote an essay entitled: "The Modern Tax System: Fair to the Average American?"

I would like to read Lisa's essay, as it has particular meaning to our current tax and budget debate:

Dating back to ancient Egypt in the year 3000 BCE, taxes have been a familiar part of society for almost as long as civilizations have existed. So how do taxes affect the current citizens of the United States? Today's tax system affects all three classes in different ways. Unfortunately, in the United States, taxation hits the average middle class family the hardest out of all three demographics.

The United States follows a progressive taxing system. This means that, ideally, families in the lowest income brackets pay the lowest percentage of taxes, while families in the highest income brackets pay the highest percentage. However, this system of taxation is flawed. Because the Bush administration cut taxes for the wealthy, families in the top income brackets pay much lower tax rates than the progressive system calls for. Also, because taxes include sales taxes, property taxes, and other kinds of taxes in addition to income taxes, families in the highest income tax brackets almost always pay lower percentages of their income in their total taxes than low and working class families. In addition, because State and local taxes are typically regressive rather than progressive, low and middle class families are given a higher percentage of taxes than wealthy families. In 2007, out of all the income brackets, families in the middle-income bracket paid the highest percent of their income in their total taxes in Washington, D.C., Maine, Minnesota, New York, South Carolina, and Vermont. In the vast majority of the remaining States, the lowest-income families paid the highest tax percentage, and the highest-income families